

**PEOPLE'S CO-OP  
LEHI ROLLER SKATING RINK  
GRASS FURNITURE  
CHRISTENSEN'S WHOLESALE**

**Constructed: 1902-03**

**Address: 151 East State**

**Present owner: Christensen's Wholesale**

In 1963 Lehi's largest mercantile, the People's Co-operative Institute (P.C.I.) which owned both an uptown and a downtown complex, completed construction of a 22,000-square-foot building at 151 East State. It was one of the first stores in Lehi to be wired for electricity. The 4 June 1903 *Lehi Banner* commented that it was a nice place to do business because there were "no dark corners." It was also the first building in Lehi to have cement sidewalks. "This is something new in our city," noted the 9 April 1903 *Lehi Banner* "and we hope to see our merchants on main street soon do likewise and help make our city look more metropolitan."

In 1904 former Co-op manager, W.E.Racker, purchased the downtown Co-op branch and opened Racker Mercantile there. To advertise the consolidation of its business interests, the People's Co-op announced in the August 4, 1904 *Lehi Banner* that "The Branch is dead,' long live the MAIN STORE of People's Co-op on State Street."

In 1912 the People's Co-op, under manager S.I. Goodwin's direction, purchased nearly an entire block of property immediately to the west of their large store. This included the Union Hotel, Peter Larsen's Butcher Shop, and the three Wines' Cottages on the west side of First East.

In the mid-1920s, PCI business began to dwindle. The reasons were rather complicated. Although a gasoline pump and two six-hundred-gallon tanks were installed in front of the store in 1916, the "age of the automobile" made it easy to shop in other communities. Although the Co-op remained Lehi's largest mercantile, other local stores began to successfully compete for business.

In the single decade, (1926-36), the troubled PCI had at least six different managers--Sam Goodwin, A.K. Chatfield, Ward Evans, Jr., C.E. Walker, Charles Robbins, and Armond Webb. In 1929 the store listed numerous departments: yard goods, grocery, butcher shop, furniture, hardware, ready-to wear clothing (Michael Sterns shirts, Rothschilds hats, Morris dress shoes, Wolverine Cordova work shoes, Ault Williamson's shoes, Ault Shackford shoes, Durham and Rollins hosiery).

As the Depression descended on America, economic hardship struck ZCMI, parent company of the People's Co-op. In the fall of 1937 ZCMI management announced that it was abandoning twenty retail branches, including the Lehi business. "The change in policy was made," announced vice-president and general Richard W. Madsen, "because independent merchants in smaller communities preferred not to buy from us because we were competitors in retail lines."

Many of the former ZCMI branches were quickly sold, in their entirety, to local merchants. But the large Lehi property, with its numerous buildings, was sold piecemeal.

The largest Co-op building at 1251 East State became a roller skating rink in February of 1939. "The Niagara," with a new hardwood floor, advertised "Come to the Niagara and watch the falls." In the fall of 1940 the place was the Lehi Roller Skating Rink, operated by the Smuin brothers. In November of 1944 James Comer purchased the building for a farm machinery display room. He was killed in an automobile accident before the business got started, however, and his widow Frances re-leased it to the Smuin brothers for a skating rink. In July of 1948 Harry Grass leased the place and established Grass Furniture, which featured household furnishings, carpeting, drapery, and the slogan, "Oh, Go to Grass."

In 1955 C.F. Evans opened a wholesale war surplus store there. For a brief time after Evans closed, Frances Comer operated another roller skating rink. In the spring of 1960 Christensen Department Stores purchased the building and have since that time operated a wholesale warehouse for their chain of stores and also for sixty-five other establishments throughout the western states.